

# DPW UPDATE

November 2002

## DPW – The Watson Family Business

*By Jessica Eslinger*

For the Watson family, DPW is like family. In fact it is. Sort of. Like their grandfather, step-grandfather and uncle, Bruce and Scott Watson are proud employees of DPW's Transportation Division.

Bruce began as a student worker in the welding shop in 1968, and then worked at road stations in Ramona, Encinitas, Bonsall and Palomar before landing his current job as road crew supervisor for San Marcos.



*Scott Watson at  
Ramona station*

Having just hit the 25-year milestone, his brother Scott, Ramona road crew supervisor, has also worked at road stations across the County including Palomar, San Marcos, Lakeside and Spring Valley.

Between the two of them and their family history with DPW, they know a lot about County roads.

Their grandfather, Harrold Watson worked as a construction foreman for DPW in the 1940s. Things were different back then; San Diego's population was relatively small, so DPW crews built roads.

According to Scott, when Harrold and his crew were building the road to Palomar Observatory, "they would dynamite the trees, then take a dozer and just push them to the side of the road. They didn't have to worry about cleaning up

the mess because at night, neighbors would come out to chop firewood."

Harrold also helped orchestrate the change from old blade-pulling tractors to motor graders, a transformation that, during the era, saved road crews a lot of time and effort.

"It's gone from horses to computer age," said Bruce.

"Now we have hydraulics and air brakes, which are nice," said Scott. "But it was tough in those days."

Their father, Warren Watson, better known as "Jack," spent 34 years with the County. In the 1960s, he was road crew supervisor for the Valley Center station, and the family, including Scott and Bruce, lived on the yard for a while.

"My brother and I grew up as 'road station brats,'" said Bruce. "We got exposed early on," he said. They played hide-and-go-seek behind equipment, and occasionally took rides with the crew.

Their uncle, Roy Gibbs, ran a sweeper, and their step-grandfather, Fred Kirkham, was a shop supervisor at the Ramona Road Station.

"I can give you half a dozen examples of other DPW employees whose families have worked here too," said Scott.

For Scott, "it was just one of those things. I always loved Valley Center and Palomar, so the job just fit."

Palomar is one of Scott's favorite locations. During winters, he's plowed many snowy roads for school buses and other traffic. In warmer seasons, he's helped stamp out fires on the mountain by cutting down unstable trees and delivering them to the nearby station. And, while constructing South Grade at Palomar, he used his climbing background to repel down a 100-ft. cliff to pry off unstable rocks that could create driving hazards.

Bruce likes the San Marcos road station because he gets to work with a great group of people and his job allows lots of personal input.

"I like seeing jobs through; from when we spot a problem to when we go in there and solve it," said Bruce.

## **A Winning and Giving Partnership**

DPW has spent more than two years working with disabled individuals throughout the County. And, for completing the first year of our contract partnership with ARC of San Diego, DPW received a "Community Partner Award" at their annual awards luncheon.

The ARC of San Diego, founded in 1950, is a private, not-for-profit corporation that develops programs for children and adults with developmental disabilities.

Under supervision by ARC leaders and Division I and II staff, program participants help out the Divisions by painting, gardening, raking, sweeping, mowing lawns, cleaning cars and

completing various other tasks.

"They really provide a valuable service to us, as well as to the entire San Diego community," said Roberto Salazar, DPW Program Coordinator and award honoree. "We enjoy working with such reliable and determined individuals."



*Salazar (middle) accepts the award on behalf of DPW at the October 10 awards luncheon*

*[Training]*

## **Job Interviews: "Like a Boy Scout, Be Prepared"**

*by Karen Jacobs, Training*

When you're going for a job interview, being prepared makes all the difference. Here are tips on how to do that from Sharon Zeiden of the County Career Development Center. Sharon tells us:

- ❖ Look at the job application for ideas on questions you may be asked. Practice answering those questions. Practice with a friend; in front of the mirror; while you drive and then practice once more.
- ❖ Learn about the organization. If you are excited about working for them, it will be reflected in your voice and body language.
- ❖ When the day arrives, make sure you got a good night's rest. Staying up until 2 the night before will not put you at your best.

- ❖ Make sure your clothes are in good shape and comfortable and polish shoes. Looking well groomed is better than making a fashion statement.
- ❖ Know where you are going. Find out where it will be and drive there to figure out how much travel time you need. When the day comes, allow yourself even more time in case traffic is slow or there's bad weather.
- ❖ Take fresh copies of your resume, phone numbers of references, coins for a parking meter and a pen and paper.

Be prepared and see where it gets you. These tips may at least help you calm your nerves. Good Luck!

The County Career Development offers a three-hour "Successful Interviews" workshop if you'd like more information. Look for the dates in the DPW Training Calendar.

## **WEST NILE VIRUS**

*by Jack E. Thompson, Departmental Safety Coordinator*

West Nile virus is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito and can infect people, horses, many types of birds and various other animals. There is no evidence to suggest that the virus can be spread from person to person or from animal to person. While most people who become infected will not have any type of illness, it is estimated that 20% will develop West Nile fever.

Mild symptoms include fever, headache, and body aches, occasionally with a skin rash on the trunk of the body and swollen lymph glands. The symptoms of a severe infection (West Nile encephalitis or meningitis) include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, and paralysis.

It is estimated that only 1 in 150 persons infected with the virus will develop the more severe form of disease. However, because it is new, some people have reacted with fear. But health officials agree it is not a serious threat to the population. The risk is very, very low and there is only a one in 1,000 chance that a mosquito is positive and if so, only a one in 300 chance that you would become infected.

The best-known way to reduce your chances of becoming ill is by protecting yourself from mosquito bites. Apply insect repellent containing DEET (N, N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) when you're outdoors. Since mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants treated with an insect repellent containing DEET. If you spray your clothing, there is no need to spray repellent on the skin under your clothing. Additionally, whenever possible consider staying indoors at dawn, dusk, and in the early evening, which are peak mosquito biting times.

Help reduce the number of mosquitoes in areas outdoors where you live work or play, by draining sources of standing water mosquitoes' eggs develop. At least once or twice a week, empty water from flowerpots, pet food and water dishes, birdbaths, swimming pool covers, buckets, barrels, cans, etc. and discarded old tires and other items that could collect water.

While the risk is low the more you can do to protect yourself the less likely you are to ever have a problem with West Nile Virus.

## **DIVISION NEWS:**

### **Transportation Services**

#### **Singleton & Delatorre Lend a Helping Hand**

In mid-September, Terrence Singleton, of Spring Valley's Division I Road Station, was on his way to Bonita when he noticed an accident on the corner of Felicita Ave. and Jamacha Blvd. An elderly woman was lying on the ground after misjudging a handicap ramp and falling from her electric wheelchair. Several people were helping her, so Singleton parked his county vehicle in a way that would prevent cars from disrupting the scene and would provide ample room for emergency personnel to come to her rescue. He then got out of his truck to divert traffic. Robert Delatorre arrived moments later and assisted Singleton in securing the scene. Once the woman was transported to a hospital, they safeguarded the patient's expensive chair by storing it at the Spring Valley Road Station, and made arrangements for her to contact them when she was released from the hospital.

Members of the San Miguel Fire Department were thankful for Singleton and Delatorre's support, so much so, that an engineer from the station wrote:

"It is refreshing to see genuine concern and services provided by other public employees. These men were professional, helpful and I wanted to express my thanks for a job well done," said Alan Laatsch.

Singleton and Delatorre's selfless actions set a powerful example of the County's motto, "the noblest motive is the public good."

### **Land Development**

#### **DPW Wins APWA Award**

DPW received "Honorable Mention" for its completion of the Ramona Airport Runway Extension from the American Public Works Association.

The \$6 million project included runway and taxiway extension and resurfacing, new run-up area at the east end of the taxiway, new compass rose, realignment of the south taxiway and drainage improvements.

Since Ramona Airport is home to the busiest California Department of Forestry and U.S. Forest Service aerial fire attack base in the nation, extension of the runway was necessary to allow for larger firefighting aircraft.

"The runway extension project at Ramona Airport was one of the most significant in the history of County Airports," said Rick Jenkins, Airports Director. "Completing the project with minimal impact to airport users, especially fire fighting air tanker aircraft, was a major accomplishment."



### **Engineering Services**

*Local dignitaries and DPW staff joined District 2 Supervisor Dianne Jacob in groundbreaking ceremonies for the Ramona Street sidewalk project last month.*

*The project involves new sidewalks on Ramona Street from Hanson Lane to near SR 67. DPW's Nassarin Samii (far right) helped turn earth during the ceremony.*